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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses developmental theories of morality exemplified by the writings of Piaget and Kohlberg which emphasize cognitive processes in moral judgment. Aspects of Piaget's and Kohlberg's theories are summarized, with particular attention to the stage concept and the role of intention in moral judgment. Relevant criticisms of the cognitive-developmental approach are reviewed. The paper also comments on the issues of the role of social and cultural influences, the role of child-rearing techniques and parental role modeling on moral development, and the effectiveness of educational interventions in fostering moral development. It is concluded that the major contributions of the cognitive-developmental theorists have been, for the most part, conceptual and theoretical; that these writers have pointed to the importance of factors of cognition in effect during the course of development, and to the common foundations of the morally mature orientation to life.
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MORAL JUDGMENT AND THE COGNITIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL
APPROACH TO SOCIALIZATION

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Moral Judgment and the Cognitive-Developmental Approach to Socialization

Perhaps no single area of research cuts across the disciplines of science as that of human development - from medicine and psychiatry to sociology, with emphases in psychology. In the process of human growth and development, the learning and incorporation of moral beliefs and the subsequent abilities to recognize and carry through with socially adaptive behaviors is interwoven in and amongst the processes of intellectual and physical development.

As functioning members of society, we assume objective responsibilities and obligations to the community and attempt to recognize the order of things in the course of our dealings with society. Morality, as such, may be viewed as the development, formulation and expression of intentions or conscience that tends to shape and influence a person's outlook on life. The ability of an individual to exercise moral judgments in given situations is one which is shaped and refined throughout life - one which has its beginnings in one's earliest years.

Developmental theories of morality which emphasize cognitive processes in decision-making, the topic of the present paper, are exemplified by the writings of Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg. The theories espoused by Piaget and Kohlberg are set apart from others in the developmental literature by not only their conceptual features but their philosophical underpinnings. Growing from the Rousseau doctrine of "innate purity" which holds that the corrupting influences of adult society should be minimized in the early years, they place special emphasis on the importance of higher cognitive/mental processes in the course of moral development. As compared to either the Freudian or the pure learning-based approaches to moral development, less emphasis is placed upon such matters as ego development or reinforcement principles per se.

The developmental literature contains references to various interrelations among Kohlberg's principled morality, Piaget's formal operations, and Erikson's ego identity concept, with Piaget and Erikson theorizing on the interdependent development of formal operations and identity questioning and Kohlberg hypothesizing formal thought as prerequisite to the capabilities for principled moral judgment. During the last fifteen

years, Kohlberg's version of the cognitive-developmental approach to understanding moral judgment has been especially well recognized and researched as a viable model for moral judgment in a developmental framework.

With these general considerations on the cognitive-based orientation to moral development in mind, an overview of the major theoretical approaches of Piaget and Kohlberg follows, with emphases on particular features of interest - including the stage concept and outcome vs. intention as determinants in the development of capacities for moral judgments. Relevant criticisms will be reviewed in contrast to research supporting the cognitive-developmental approach. The role of the family and the teaching of moral values will also be discussed. Summaries of the major points considered will be included, and areas in need of further research will be indicated.

Piaget's Cognitive-Based Theory of Moral Development

Piaget (1932/1965) proposed a theory of moral development in which the concepts of morality are acquired via an established process. Assuming two major stages of development, the primary dimensions of which vary according to the individual's conception of justice and his conception of rules and social order, Piaget postulates that an experiential progression of sorts from an early stage of Moral Realism to a more mature state of consciousness known as the Morality of Reciprocity, or Autonomous Morality, takes place. The progress from one stage to the next is said to be unvarying, as one must first experience the sense of moral realism before moving on or graduating to the level of autonomous morality. Understanding and acceptance of social rules and the child's concern for human equality and reciprocity, or Autonomous Morality, takes place. The progress from one stage to the next is said to be unvarying, as one must first experience the sense of moral realism before moving on or graduating to the level of autonomous morality. Understanding and acceptance of social rules and the child's concern for human equality and reciprocity are both held necessary to the achievement of moral maturity in the Piagetian framework.

Piaget investigated changes in the moral judgments of children in two main ways. He observed shifts with age in children's attitudes

towards play and the rules of various games of childhood, and he recorded children's reactions to and explanations of stories which presented transgressions or seeming injustices of various kinds. He noted that young children tend to use the consequences of an act as the basis for determining its "goodness" up until about the age of 8 or 9; beyond the age of 8 or 9, according to Piaget, children tend to focus on the intention of the character in a story as a basis for evaluating actions and making moral interpretations.

In interviewing many children aged 6 to 13 after presenting such stories in pairs, Piaget determined that the subjects ascended a scale moving from the morality of heteronomy to a morality of autonomy - but due to what social or environmental influences? Piaget's primary focus is on the contribution of peers in the child's life, rather than family - since the movement away from pure realism and egocentrism can only take place as the child is able to contrast his point of view with those of others through shared experiences with peers in the course of everyday experience. According to Piaget, children's relationships with adults are intrinsically heteronomous. It is mainly through the interchange that takes place in the course of social interactions with other children that moral maturity develops in the sense that higher cognitive processes are utilized.

Piaget holds that a number of cognitive alterations occur predictably with age in the course of moral development. In support of this general notion, Tomlinson-Keasey and Keasey (1974) have recently found that formal operations and principled morality scores are correlated positively. Many of Piaget's predictions have likewise been well supported by other research across a number of cultures, consistent with his belief that human cognitive development follows an approximate logical order regardless of different learning experiences or social environs. Features of the Piagetian model which have been well supported through the years of research on moral judgment and maturity include the following:

Intentionality - the process whereby acts are judged according to the intentions of the actor rather than the consequences of the situation.

For example, an older child will usually consider breaking a cup while stealing a cookie from a cupboard far worse than accidentally breaking a dozen cups, whereas a younger child will judge the act in which more cups were destroyed as being worse.

Relativism in judgment - young children consider most behavior in terms of absolute right or wrong, while older children are more apt to evaluate an act in the broader context of the setting or situation at hand.

Independence of sanctions - younger children behave properly due to fear of punishment or physical harm, while older children seem to "decide" upon proper ways of behavior.

Use of reciprocity - the points of view and the needs of others are taken into account more with age in the course of developing moral judgment and behavior.

Thus, Piaget's views on moral development are certainly considered cognitive in orientation and are age-related in their application, with attention to inter-relations with peers as the primary means through which a majority of one's moral maturity is mediated.

Kohlberg's Sequences of Moral Development

While accepting and elaborating upon many of the major tenets that Piagetian theory is founded on, Kohlberg (1969) has criticized much of Piaget's theory and developed his own schema of stages, largely based on his own research with boys aged 10 to 16. In assessing these ideas on the development of moral behaviors, Kohlberg developed the Moral Judgment Scale, an instrument which is designed to objectively examine and score an individual's level of moral judgment and moral reasoning through the presentation of "dilemma" - type situations.

Kohlberg has extended Piaget's approach to a three-level invariant sequence, each level containing two stages which are defined according to different bases for moral judgments. The stages are viewed as developmental in that they define a hierarchy, in which the achievement of higher stages depends upon an individual's reasoning at earlier stages. Each of these stages of the subsequent levels of moral development were originally derived from not only what the boys in Kohlberg's studies indicated as being "obedient" vs. "need-serving"

act in the dilemma stories, but also on the stated justifications for their choices. The order of emergence of the stages is invariable, though the rate of progression from one level to another and the highest stages achieved may vary from one society or culture to another.

Kohlberg's system consists of six developmental stages, each defined in terms of its relation to 30 different moral attributes (some borrowed from Piaget) which enter into the judgmental thinking of children and adolescents; each moral statement expressed by an interviewee is assigned to one of 180 cells along a classificatory system (the 30 attributes, each containing a 6-point scale corresponding to the six stages):

<u>Levels and Stages of Moral Development</u>		
	<u>Level</u>	<u>Stage</u>
I.	Premoral level (preconventional)	1. Punishment and obedience orientation
II.	Morality of conventional role conformity (conventional)	2. Naive instrumental orientation
		3. Good-boy morality of maintaining good relations and approval of others
III.	Morality of self-accepted moral principles (postconventional)	4. Authority-maintaining morality
		5. Morality of contract and of democratically accepted law
		6. Morality of individual principles of conscience

Illustrative Behaviors

- Stage 1. Obeys rules in order to avoid punishment
- Stage 2. Conforms to obtain rewards, to have favors returned
- Stage 3. Conforms to avoid disapproval, dislike of others
- Stage 4. Conforms to avoid censure by legitimate authorities, with resultant guilt
- Stage 5. Conforms to maintain the respect of the impartial spectator, judging in terms of community welfare
- Stage 6. Conforms to avoid self-condemnation

(from Kohlberg, 1963, p. 15)

Kohlberg and others have asserted that the evidence for the sequential and hierarchical structure of his stages rests on empirically

based findings. Empirical evidence has been put forth from the following research: (a) Kohlberg's (1958) original study; (b) cross-sectional and longitudinal studies showing that older subjects demonstrate higher-stage reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969; Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969; Kuhn, 1976; Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz & Anderson, 1974; and (c) comprehension studies in which subjects show comprehension of all stages below their own (Rest, 1973; Rest, Turiel & Kohlberg, 1969). In Kohlberg's early research, certain age trends were found - consistent with the view that the stages are progressive and developmental in nature - and this has remained a point of controversy since.

It has been concluded from the work of Turiel (1966) and others that Kohlberg's stages 2, 3 and 4 are successively advanced cognitive levels, and that children are more likely to progress from one to the next rather than supercede any single level. According to Kohlberg, cognitive conflict does indeed play an important role in moral development, a point which is consistent with the general Piagetian approach to human development.

It should be noted that critics have been most skeptical of Kohlberg's characterizations of moral development beyond Stage 4 (Kurtines & Grief, 1974). Kramer (1968) has presented longitudinal data which showed that in some cases level of moral reasoning seems to temporarily slip back to earlier modes of operation during late adolescence - findings which cast doubt upon the "invariant, irreversible" claim that Kohlberg posits for his stage theory. A brief review of cross-cultural research which is presented later in this paper is also of value in providing an additional perspective on this issue.

Comments on Stage Theory

Cognitive-developmental theorists such as Kohlberg have for years represented the strong organismic version of the developmental model of human growth and behavior. In support of the stage theory of human development in the context of moral maturity, Kohlberg and Kramer (1969) have stated

"The stage concept not only postulates irreversible qualitative structural change, but in addition postulates . . . that this change occurs in a pattern of universal stepwise invariant sequences" (p. 99).

In the language of behavior, analogous but lower-order patterns of functioning are prerequisite to the development of higher-order patterns of functioning; however, lower-order functional patterns do not necessarily disappear, as Kohlberg would imply, when higher patterns emerge (Halpern, 1965). Logically speaking, they may be hierarchically integrated into the emerging behavioral patterns, with the higher-order functions centralizing and regulating the lower-order functional patterns. Much controversy on the "stepwise, invariable, irreversible" nature of the proposed stage process of cognitive development has ensued due to this contention, and justly so. A further examination of other technical aspects in the reasoning and decision-making process lends perspective to these contentions.

Outcome vs. Intention in Moral Judgment

Much of the research on moral judgment and age deals with the inability of young children to conserve the idea of intentions as a foundation for executing a moral decision. This notion has been supported by studies which have noted the existence of an age trend toward increased use of intention (Gutkin, 1972; Weiner & Peter, 1973). Such findings represent a departure from Piaget's original contention that children's use of either outcome or intention are key pivot-points in moral decision-making - that is, that these processes are exclusive of one another.

Chandler, Greenspan and Barenboim (1973) have speculated that young children are unable to decenter, i.e., to consider more than a single piece of information at a time, in making a judgment. If this were to explain moral judgments, then a logical trend toward increased use of intention with age would be expected. Chandler et.al. found that strengthening the salience of intentions very often promoted intention-based judgments with very young children.

Gottlieb, Taylor and Ruderman (1977), who have noted a number of confounding factors in such research on moral judgment, pointed to the possibility that young children's preferences for outcome information may be due to a recency effect, and that the use of outcome information by young children may be due to their preference for concrete, specific language, a point also noted by Peevers and Secord (1973). Gottlieb et.al. (1973), in an attempt to determine the nature and extent of usage of outcome or intention information as cognitive bases for children's

moral judgments, identified three different strategies of moral reasoning in different-aged groups of children: in one group of young children (less than 6 years of age) either the motive of the character in a moral dilemma situation or the outcome was the focus, with subjects unable to shift from one perspective to the other; in an older (less than 8) group, subjects focused on either outcome or motive, but most were able to shift their perspective; the oldest group (children 9 or older) was able to consider both motive and outcome information in their judgments, and were also capable of evaluating each in a distinct fashion. Gottlieb et.al. concluded that abilities of role-taking and decentering, often referred to as similar processes, are "two abilities which predict different behaviors . . . role takers shift perspective back and forth, while decenterers consider two perspectives simultaneously" (p. 556), and that sequences in moral judgment were ordered in their progression due to a single cognitive ordering process present at each step of the progression.

Greenspan and Simeonson (1978) predicted that 7-year olds, who normally would be expected to make "consequential" moral judgments, would execute intention-based judgments when moral dilemmas (either outcome- or action-oriented) were preceded by an audiotaped adult prohibition statement that stressed intentional factors in the upcoming situation. The direction of these 7-year olds' judgments was influenced by the adult prohibition, while an additional group of 9-year olds gave intention-based judgments in all experimental conditions. The authors concluded that outcome-oriented prohibitions may prove less effective with young children than more primitive action-oriented prohibitions.

In summary, age trends in the development of moral maturity have been documented - but might these be accounted for by other age-related differences in reasoning approaches? Gottlieb, Taylor and Ruderman (1977), in a discussion of research methodology in the developmental studies to date, pointed to the failure to consider such finer aspects of children's reasoning strategies in the course of investigations of children's moral development. Based on this writer's experience with the Moral Judgment Scale, questioning which is more careful and meticulous than that called for in the requirements for standard administration can yield insights as to the discrete strategies underlying moral judgments and interpretations of dilemma situations.

Assessment of Moral Maturity: Criticisms

Both Piaget's and Kohlberg's techniques of assessing moral development are considered to be "projective" judgments of the actions of others. A question arises about the relation between one's views of others and one's own moral behaviors, and whether the assessment of moral attitudes by means of such "projection" is truly predictive of the individual's abilities to enact similar behaviors. Both theorists are undoubtedly aware of this, though it has not been addressed in their writings. In the opinion of this writer, perhaps the mere exposure to advanced moral concepts in the course of interaction with an adult (parent, teacher - even researcher?) makes the child prefer them to concepts believed to be held at his own current level.

In recent years there have also been some doubts raised as to the reliability and validity of Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Scale, the most widely used assessment tool in research on moral development. Kurtines and Grief (1974) noted a lack of data concerning the test-retest reliability and the consistency of any given testee's moral judgment stage from one dilemma to the next. Many researchers have also noted particular administration problems associated with the long-form interview procedure.

Rubin and Trotter (1977), in an effort to establish test-retest reliability estimates of the Moral Judgment Scale and the levels of response consistency present from one dilemma to the next, administered either standard or multiple-choice formats of the scale to groups of children at two-week intervals. Data analyses revealed low test-retest reliability between the different administrations, and low inter-correlations among items within each dilemma on the test. These authors, and others, have suggested that future research of a large scale nature is needed to ascertain the psychometric properties of instruments designed to measure such cognitive-developmental processes as moral maturity.

Social and Cultural Influences on Moral Development

The social and cultural environs to which individuals are exposed is believed to have some direct bearing on the rate and extent of moral development. Individuals who live in highly advanced indus-

trialized settings are believed to be able to rise through the lower stages of moral maturity at a rapid rate and to achieve the higher stages more often than do individuals in less developed settings. The greater complexity of industrialized societies may very possibly be an important factor in the development of moral maturity.

Cross-national research on moral development using the Kohlberg scale along with additional measures of attitudes or behaviors has been conducted in Canada, Mexico and England (Kohlberg & Kramer, 1969), in the Bahamas (White, 1975; White, Bushnell & Regnemer, 1978) and in the British Honduras (Gorsuch & Barnes, 1973). These cross-national research studies have consistently indicated age-based trends in moral reasoning through the first four stages, with evidence of Stage 5 and Stage 6 types of reasoning emerging so rarely that their status has yet to be fully investigated outside of the United States. Nevertheless, what Kohlberg describes as a universally applicable model of moral development is believed to be somewhat culturally biased (see Simpson, 1974), since all cultures do not emphasize the same kinds of self-derived autonomous principles in the course of moral decision-making.

The Family and Moral Development

In the writings of Kohlberg and Piaget over the years, there seems to be some general agreement between the two on a crucial point: that the family's influence on the moral development of the child is only as important as that of other significant persons in the child's life. Kohlberg (1969) has stated that "family participation is not unique or critically necessary for moral development, and the dimensions on which it stimulates moral development are primarily general dimensions by which other primary groups stimulate moral development" (p. 399). All children encounter ethical conflicts in real life, in which they must exercise some form of logic or reasoning - both Kohlberg and Piaget have stressed the importance of social interaction as a prerequisite for the child to progress from one stage of moral maturity to the next.

Parents' own behaviors and beliefs are known to affect their children's through modelling and identification processes, and

parents may indeed foster or constrain the capacities for adequate moral development on the part of their children. Hoffman and Saltzstein (1967) gathered data on children's moral development and their identification with parents. They then related parents' and children's descriptions of family discipline techniques. Few significant relationships were found between fathers' disciplinary techniques and the moral maturity of their children; however, relationships were found between the reprimanding and correcting techniques of mothers and their children's moral development. The authors suggested that the "father role" may be largely that of a background role model, with mothers serving as the more influential characters with whom children identify in regard to moral development.

Education and Moral Values

Kohlberg (1973) and a host of other writers have contended that the fostering of moral ideas and values can legitimately be built into the public education process. Several studies have been conducted in which moral judgment and behaviors have successfully been taught to school-aged children. Techniques utilizing modelling and reinforcement are apparently the most promising with young children (Childress, 1975; Jensen & Rytling, 1975; Rushton, 1975), while older children and adolescents appear to achieve greater gains with role-playing techniques (Matify & Acksen, 1976).

One technique which has been found to be particularly useful in the teaching of moral principles is Kohlberg's (1973) "match plus one" approach. This approach is based on the notion that a "match" exists between the child's present level of moral maturity and his responses to moral dilemma situations. In using this approach, the child's present degree of moral maturity is first assessed; he is then presented with a moral dilemma where actions which are common at his particular level are not sufficient to solve the conflict, and the child must resort to actions more characteristic of the next level of moral maturity in an effort to satisfactorily solve the dilemma. In the process the child, when later confronted with similar moral dilemma situations, is more adept at internalizing those actions typical of a more advanced moral stage. Incidentally, studies of experimentally induced change have also shown that scores on Rest's Defining Issues Test can be significantly in-

creased by moral education interventions of several months' duration, though not by short-term intervention (Rest, Cooper, Coder, Masanz & Anderson, 1974).

Closing Remarks

The major contributions of the cognitive-developmental theorists have been, for the most part, conceptual and theoretical. Through their research and writing, attention has been called to the individual's own direct experience with the environment of others, the bounds of which differ between family, peers, and people in society at-large. These writers have sensitized us to the factors of cognition in effect during the course of development, and to the common foundations of the morally mature orientation to life. The majority of evidence that cognitive factors are important in the moral development process, as opposed to the position that values derived as such are "affective" in nature, is well founded.

In this writer's opinion, the concept of a "need to cognize" may lie at the heart of the issue of what motivates individuals to move on toward higher levels of functioning (moral or otherwise) rather than fixate and be satisfied with the present state of affairs. In the course of living, an individual must repeatedly reach out to the world and attempt to selectively incorporate and assimilate whatever he may find there - this view is consistent within an overall framework of survival and adaptation to one's environment.

Additional research on children's abilities to, first, comprehend and, second, to produce evidence of moral reasoning processes is in order. Personality and situational factors which may limit both behavioral adaptability and consistency in the moral realm should also be investigated. Other areas in need of much further research are those dealing with the importance of role models, especially those which are believed to directly influence moral decisions and behaviors. Applications of findings to the home and school settings would be of benefit in furthering our understanding of the psychological processes at work in the development of moral attitudes and behaviors, and would be of value to all concerned.

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